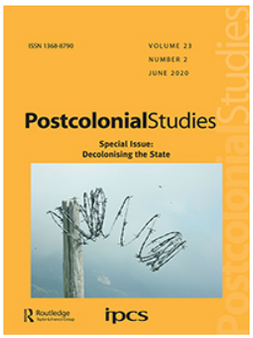


Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Postcolonial Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cpcs20

# Subalter-nation: narrating Burma

Pavan Kumar Malreddy

**To cite this article:** Pavan Kumar Malreddy (2020) Subalter-nation: narrating Burma, Postcolonial Studies, 23:2, 210-225, DOI: 10.1080/13688790.2020.1751912

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1751912

Published online: 07 May 2020.

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES
2020, VOL. 23, NO. 2, 210–225
https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1751912

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group



# Subalter-nation: narrating Burma

Pavan Kumar Malreddy

Institute of English and American Studies, Goethe University Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany

**ABSTRACT**

Drawing from Aung San Suu Kyi's *Freedom from Fear* (1991) and Pascal Khoo Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts* (2002), this article examines how the discourses of nation-building in Burma are inextricably linked to sovereign ambitions of state-building through militaristic and insurgent means. In particular, it focuses on the contested nature of both nation- and state-building ideologies in Burma, which are characterised by a rift within their respective modes of narration: national autobiography and subaltern autobiography. The genre of national autobiography, which is commonly associated with the life histories of national leaders, has gained considerable attention in recent literary criticism. This article suggests that while Suu Kyi's autobiography remains complicit with elite nationalism, Pascal Khoo Thwe's life narrative charts Burmese national history through individual and communal trajectories. Within this, the article introduces the notion of subalter-nation as a narrative mode of subaltern autobiography that forges the means of another national consciousness through insurgent and secessionist sovereign ambitions.

**KEYWORDS**

Nationalism; autobiography; ethnic insurgency; state-building; Burma

## Introduction

The ongoing persecution of the Rohingya minorities in Burma – reignited by the 2012 Buddhist–Muslim riots in the Arakan state – has cast a dark shadow over Aung San Suu Kyi's political legacy, drawing such egregious media headlines as 'Suu Kyi's Buddhist problem' or 'Suu Kyi declares love for Myanmar Army'.[1] For her part, Suu Kyi took both her supporters and detractors by surprise by unequivocally confessing her love for the army: 'It's terrible what they've done and I don't like what they've done at all, but if you love somebody I think you love her or him in spite of and not because of'.[2] Political pundits, news analysts, and her fellow Nobel laureates seeking to account for this volte-face in Suu Kyi's oeuvre have unceremoniously resorted to the conventional wisdom: 'power corrupts'. Consider for instance, Gayatri Spivak's remark:

> The fact is that when the pro-democracy spokesperson Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest there, she could bravely work against oppressive behaviour on the part of the military government. But once she was released and wanted to secure and retain power, she became largely silent on the plight of these people and has sided with the majority party, which has continued to wage violence against non-Buddhist minorities.[3]

**CONTACT** Pavan Kumar Malreddy malreddy@em.uni-frankfurt.de

Although Spivak does not go as far as to suggest that leaders such as Suu Kyi should permanently be assigned to the role of the opposition to do 'brave work', she fails to recognize the fact that what Suu Kyi said and did about the military government or non-Buddhist minorities is nothing new. In fact, her ineffable affection for the army built by her father, her emulative self-fashioning as the latter's natural successor, her inordinate faith in Buddhist nationalism as panacea for secessionist violence, or her advocacy of military democracy infused with Buddhist virtues of 'human worth' as the ultimate remedy for people under 'tyrannical force of oppression', are all consistent with her autobiographical writings, letters and political speeches between 1995 and 2003.[4] For the purpose of this article, however, this implied narrative pact between *visions* of nation-building and the *violence* of state-building occasions a renewed interest in autobiographical narratives.

Having said that, Spivak's views on Suu Kyi are neither unwarranted nor entirety unanticipated. They are consistent with what Partha Chatterjee calls the 'moment of arrival' wherein the nationalist elite finally succeeds in imposing a unified narrative of nation 'in a single, consistent, unambiguous voice' but fails 'to fully appropriate the life of the nation' into the former, thereby opening up space for the subaltern voices to disrupt the presumed unity of the nation-state.[5] This article concerns itself with the very clash between two forms of narrating the nation: the fraternal or filial, which critics call the national autobiography; and the subaltern and the marginalised, which I call subalter-nation. While comparing, or rather counterpoising, these two forms in Aung San Suu Kyi's *Freedom from Fear* (1991) and Pascal Khoo Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts* (2001), I suggest that if national autobiography is constitutive of a 'syntax' of nation-building through 'filial' and 'fraternal' bonds,[6] subalter-nation is a narrative mode of a fragmented nation that anticipates, and is predicated upon, insurrectional solutions to hegemonic sovereignty. As the narrating subjects of subalter-nation are bereft of any political space for staging their nationalist aspirations, let alone the filiative bonds of the national autobiographers, the narrative itself assumes an insurgent mode, both in its literal and figurative iterations.[7] If national autobiography enunciates anti-colonial national construction, then subalter-nation denunciates the postcolonial state formation through insurgent narrative modes that inflect anti-state ideologies of *subversion* and *secession*. In what follows, I examine four such modes, namely: image-dissolution, collective narration, performative nationalism, and inclusive sovereignty. These modes, as this article reveals, countervail the(ir) conceptual dyads accrued to national autobiography: emulative self-fashioning, the Cartesian split, pedagogic nationalism, and exclusive sovereignty.

## Nation-building as state-building: the limits of national autobiography

At the onset of decolonisation, the national autobiography anticipated the birth of new nations, which coincided with the birth of new national leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), and Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore). According to Philip Holden, the autobiographies of such national heroes

> [f]eature a two-fold movement in which the male protagonist reclaims his place in a collective after mental or physical exile and then urges fellow citizens of the nation-to-be to undergo a similar process of individualization and reclaiming of a shared past in order to claim citizenship.[8]

Challenging the established assumptions between the 'unitary subjecthood' of 'Western' autobiographies and the performative, if not agential, character of 'non-Western' life narratives, Holden suggests that even 'revolutionary autobiography that is an "out-law genre" under colonial regime may be employed to incite a unitary subjectivity for citizen and the nation-to-be' by the 'colonial comprador class'.[9] While Holden's paradoxical association between 'revolutionary autobiography' and 'colonial comprador class' may hold true for *canonical* or *high intellectual* national autobiography, as we shall see, it would be misleading to read the entire genre of national autobiography as invariably canonical (or comprador), for there exist visions and versions or subaltern life narratives that were never accorded the status of 'national autobiographies'. This is largely to do with the origins of the genre itself, which, as Elleke Boehmer points out, is aligned 'with the moment of independence, or with its strong anticipation'.[10] In the national autobiographies of the 1960s, the national hero typically positions himself 'within a tightly woven *genealogical network*, that is, to claim pedigree'[11] through an 'intertextual network of emulative self-fashioning that is frequently fraternal and filial in nature'.[12]

Apropos the leadership traits of the national heroes, the autobiographic form assumes an individuality that is assertive and complete. The Platonic traits of the self-knowledge are not only complemented by certain Cartesian elements of the split between body and mind – 'inhabit[ing] a space poised ambiguously between the private and the public'[13] – but more importantly, by the author's intellectual prowess to traverse, if not transcend, this very split, which enables him/her to narrate their past as a purportedly objective ensemble of facts alongside the nation's past. At least, this is how national autobiographies are read, as Holden rightly laments: as sources of '… inspiration tactics or for cultural or historical knowledge – while its literariness, the manner in which it is presented to a reader is neglected'.[14] Here, the leader's past mirrors the nation's past, as the national autobiographies invariably 'function within the nation as documents of – and indeed, by being read as incitements to – the production of citizens of the new nation state'.[15]

In his reading of Jawaharlal Nehru's autobiography *The Discovery of India* (1946), Partha Chatterjee draws attention to an inverted dimension of such mirroring between nation-building and state-building. In the European theories on nationalism, however, nation-formation precedes state-formation, for the achievement of territorial sovereignty ('statehood') is touted as the ultimate expression of nation-building. This teleological contingency is not the rule, as Ernest Gellner cautions, but an exception: 'nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a *universal necessity*'.[16] In the postcolonial context, Gellner's caveat gains a renewed urgency, wherein the 'moment of independence' is typically aligned with the project of state-building; a project devised by an arbitrary national mapping of people, cultures, and ethnicities into contained territories by an occupying force. For post-independence societies, however, the inheritance of such manufactured nationhood meant legitimising *both* state-formation and nation-formation as simultaneous, imminent, and mutually effacing political processes, undeterred by their teleological causation elsewhere[17] – a position this essay maintains throughout.

As the subsequent discussion reveals, national autobiography becomes an anxious site of an inverted mirroring of the leader and the nation on the one hand, and nation-building and state-building on the other, in which emulative self-fashioning, image-building, and pedagogic nationalism conjure up a discourse of what Robin Eckersley calls 'exclusive sovereignty'.[18]

## Aung San Suu Kyi and national autobiography

If emulative self-fashioning is a central tenet of image-building of national leaders, we find ample evidence of it throughout Suu Kyi's treatise,[19] beginning with her image on the cover of *Freedom from Fear*, which was chosen by her late husband Michael Aris, who was also responsible for collecting and editing Suu Kyi's letters and autobiographical pieces and presenting them in book form. As we learn from his Introduction to the book, Aris chose what appears to be a weary-faced, aged, and trouble-eyed photograph of Suu Kyi because he wanted to show 'what these long years' of isolation 'have done to her, the wisdom and beauty beyond the suffering' that she had 'endured'.[20] Aris' timing of the publication couldn't have been better: the awarding of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize to Suu Kyi, which put her on the global map. Could one then read the publication of an English autobiography of Suu Kyi, at a time of her political imprisonment and international recognition in the West as the champion of human rights, no more than a calculated move on the part of Aris?

Aris' remark on Suu Kyi's 'beauty and wisdom' offers us better insights into the above coincidence, one that goes hand-in-hand with her portrayal in the Western media as a 'frail, beautiful woman' taking on a notorious military junta.[21] This 'beauty and the beast' contest – as dubbed by *Vogue Magazine* – had been at its feverish pitch since her days under house arrest (1989-2003), leading to the general election in 2015, when her image appeared on 'posters, stickers, key rings, and baseball caps'.[22] Such image-building of the national leader has an emulative effect, much like the prison photographs Nelson Mandela – to whom Suu Kyi is often compared – which were 'widely disseminated in magazines, newspapers, and sculptures and other artworks and his name attached to buildings, public squares and roads'.[23]

But unlike Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* in which, *pace* male hero's national journey, Winnie Mandela is granted 'a womanly, supporting role with masculine edge'[24], Suu Kyi emulates the very masculine syntax of national autography by re-fashioning, if not self-endorsing her feminine image. In a letter dated on 14th April 1989, Suu Kyi writes to an editor in Rangoon:

> The last trip (after the Danubyu one) was rather gruelling, travelling by bullock cart and small boats in the blazing sun, alas, your Suu is getting weather-beaten, none of that pampered elegance left as she tramps the countryside spattered with mud, straggly-haired, breathing in dust and pouring with sweat! I need a few months in grey, damp Oxford to restore my complexion.[25]

Suu Kyi's throwaway remark on restoring her 'complexion', which evidently took a 'beating' by the 'dust' and 'mud' of the Burmese countryside, woefully plays into the masculine hegemony of the Western-educated male national hero. Of course, one cannot overstate the personal nature of Suu Kyi's note, but one cannot undermine the syntax of national autobiography either, wherein the national leader typically follows a '*repeating sequence* of patterns (syntagmatic units)' of self-imposed or forced exile,[26] followed by a return home, and touring the countryside to amass popular support and a public image.

If emulative self-fashioning in national autobiography unfolds through the authority vested in the iconicity of national figures, who 'correspond with and comment on each other', and even model 'their narratives on (or at times distanced them from) those of their predecessors',[27] then the physical image of the leader cannot be detached from its

corresponding national image. As a number of commentators have remarked on Gandhi's body, his ascetic fakir-like appeal was part of his charismatic authority that is written into the nation's body.[28] But in Suu Kyi's case, it is her father who becomes the anchor of emulative self-fashioning, whom she often compares to Gandhi and Nehru. The dedication credits for *Freedom from Fear* read: … *Bogyoke* Aung San. When I honour my father, I honour all those who stand for political integrity in Burma'.[29] True to its dedication, Aung San returns almost in every fifth page of the book for the sole purpose of 'drawing out a more or less conventional family tree … or a network of ideological inherence plotting important precursors and mentors'.[30]

While Suu Kyi's opening chapters 'Inheritance' and 'My Father' are replete with possessiveness that overrides the distinction between the nation and her father, she maintains an objective, value-neutral, if not a scholarly tone throughout, intervening in the narrative only when describing her father's rise from humble origins: Aung San as someone who had struggled among his more privileged peers to rise up the ranks of the Young Men's Buddhist Association in the 1920s. Complicit with the Cartesian splitting of reason and emotion of the Romantic and Victorian autobiographers who 'represent themselves as ghostly presences in their texts, inhabiting neither this world nor an afterlife, but a limbo between the two',[31] Suu Kyi's subsequent chapters 'My Country and People' and 'The Need for Solidarity Among Ethnic Groups' employ a combination of 'historical objectivity that can be achieved in autobiography' and 'subjective view of past events' that helps renegotiate the Cartesian divide.[32]

Although Suu Kyi is not unaware of her *affective* privilege, her persistent equation of *her* family with that of the *national* family culminates in what I would call affective pedagogies of an assimilable nation in which privilege becomes a quotidian property. For instance, when extending her solidarity to those who fear the Burmese junta, she invokes her own fearlessness as the product of her experience in 'free societies', which instilled some sense of bravery in her.[33] On another occasion, she calls for inclusiveness of all religions and races in Burma based on her mother's treatment of non-Burmese minorities at her home in Rangoon:

> [W]e always had people from various ethnic groups living with us. At that time my mother was working with nurses … She would invite those from ethnic minorities to stay at our home. I was taught to live closely with people from other ethnic communities.[34]

While there is nothing inherently wrong with *affective* privilege as such, its presumed manifestation as the general condition of Burma, or as the norm that ought to be embraced by all Burmans, tends to produce nationalist pedagogies that Homi Bhabha describes as 'the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of "the people" or "the nation" and make them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narratives'.[35]

In what Bhabha terms the 'advent of the epochal', nationalist pedagogies concoct a historical discourse by 'looking to the legitimacy of past generations as supplying cultural autonomy' thereby signifying its 'people as an *a priori* historical presence'.[36] For Suu Kyi, Buddhism becomes the anchor of such *a priori* historical presence, as exemplified in the possessive rubric of her chapter 'My Country and People', in which she indulges in a lengthy discussion on Theravada Buddhism to ascertain its Eight Precepts as the pillars of Burmese identity,[37] while glossing over all other religious and tribal minorities.

Where she does mention the religious or cultural genesis of the ethnic minorities, they are reified into objects of the 'advent of the epochal' that help legitimise *a priori* Buddhist national presence. For instance, by alluding to the presence of the Rohingya as mere 'Bengali and Islamic influences', Suu Kyi reassures that 'Arakan has been a predominantly Buddhist region for centuries'.[38] In her chapter 'Intellectual Life in Burma and India under Colonialism', she goes as far as to equate Buddhism with Burmese ethnicity – 'To be Burmese is to be Buddhist' – by distinguishing the latter from the Shans, another Buddhist group of Tai ethnic origins, who took up Theravada Buddhism from the Burmese in the sixteenth century.[39] Thus, she portrays the Shans as an integral part of Burma since the reign of King Bayinnaung (1550) and separates them in the same breath as non-Burmese ethnic others who evidently 'had taught' the Burmese the dangers brought forth by foreign invasions.[40] Not only foreign invasions, as it were, but the very presence of foreign elements in Burma serve a pretext for Suu Kyi to assimilate non-Buddhist minorities into the 'foundational fictions' of a nationalist pedagogy:

> […] Burma was a nation not just of Burmese but also of the Shans, Chins, Kachins, Karens, Mons, and other indigenous people. There were, in addition, those members of the immigrant communities who had established indissoluble ties of love and loyalty with the country of adoption.[41]

Yet, this inclusive narration of immigrant communities is immediately disavowed by the exclusionary parlance of the nationalist pedagogy, as Suu Kyi goes on to claim that Buddhism as the Burmese national identity was in fact strengthened by the presence of Hindus and Chinese who had effectively outnumbered the Burmese, particularly in the cities, in the late nineteenth century.[42] Buddhism, Suu Kyi asserts, much like the intellectual elitism of anti-colonial nationalism in India, provided a sense of 'self identity' and 'self-concept which enabled the Burmese to see themselves as different from foreigners'.[43] The distinction from foreigners, Suu Kyi reassures, is nothing more than 'the diffused xenophobia fed by a well-justified apprehension that their very existence as distinct people would be jeopardized' by the flood of immigration gates opened by the colonisers.[44] Here, Suu Kyi's principle strategy of 'exclusion by inclusion' portrays – albeit inadvertently – British colonialism as the *protagonist* of anti-colonial nationalism, not its *antagonist*; a derivative force generated by the coloniser's disruption of national unity within a predominantly Buddhist realm of identities. This veritably *subjective* narration of the nation's history, in line with its Cartesian split, stands in stark contrast with the putatively *objective* narration of the author's autobiographical past as an assemblage of facts.

Taken together, the various narrative elements in Suu Kyi's autobiography – from emulative self-fashioning to Cartesian split to pedagogic nationalism – forge the means of what Robyn Eckersley calls 'exclusive sovereignty'. Drawing from the social theorist Gianfranco Poggi, Eckersley defines 'exclusive sovereignty' as the 'political power concentrated in the state' which 'is momentous, pervasive, critical phenomenon. Together with other forms of social power, it constitutes an indispensable medium for constructing and shaping larger social realities, for establishing, shaping and maintaining all broader and more durable collectivities'.[45] This is best exemplified in the latent narrative shift in *Freedom from Fear* from nation-building to state-building, wherein Suu Kyi envisions re-sovereignisation, i.e. reaffirmation of the nation-state order, of an otherwise dysfunctional Burmese

state through a calculated infusion of her fraternal heritage, self-image, reinstitution of the military, and Western democratic principles infused with 'Buddhist values'.

Having established Buddhism as the anchor of the Burmese nation, Suu Kyi turns to re-sovereignising such durable collectivities by nullifying, abdicating, or even entirely abrogating the secessionist aspirations of the minorities such as the Kachin, the Karens and the Shans, who have taken up arms against Burmese dominance since the formal end of colonial rule. She writes:

> On 12 February 1947 an agreement was signed by Chin, Kachin and Shan leaders and by my father as the representative of the Burmese Government. This agreement, which came to be known as the Panglong Agreement after the name of the town in the Shan State where it was signed, stated the belief that 'freedom will be more speedily achieved by the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins by their immediate co-operation within the interim Burmese Government'. The Panglong Agreement is a proof that the Union of Burma is based on *voluntary decision* of different ethnic peoples to unite in the building of an independent nation and 12 February is designated as Union Day.[46]

Here, the suggestive emphasis on 'voluntary decision' not only delegitimises the ongoing insurgencies of the Chins, the Kachins and the Shans as subversive, if not entirely anti-national or anti-sovereign in spirit, but Suu Kyi's invocation of Aung San 'as the representative of the Burmese Government' helps reify the foundational sovereignty of the national hero as the only way forward. Furthermore, it forges the means of an exclusive sovereignty infused with Buddhism as the ultimate antidote to militant and insurgent troubles: 'the majority of people of Burma are Buddhists' and 'the spiritual dimension becomes particularly more important in a struggle in which deeply held convictions and strength of mind are the chief weapons against armed repression'.[47]

If Buddhism could be used to purge armed repression, then it is her own nostalgia for her father's foundational sovereignty that could purge the sins of the military regime:

> The present armed forces of Burma were created and nurtured by my father. It is not simply a matter of words to say that my father built up armed forces. It is a fact […] Let me speak frankly. I feel strong attachment for the armed forces. Not only were they built up by my father, as a child I was cared for by his soldiers […] I would therefore not wish to see any splits and struggles between the army which my father built up and the people who love my father so much. May I also from this platform ask the personnel of the armed forces to reciprocate this kind of understanding and sympathy? […] For their part the people should try to forget what has already taken place, and I would like to appeal to them not to lose their affection for the army.[48]

With the benefit of hindsight, it comes as no surprise that Suu Kyi came into power in 2016 with the help of the same army that her father had built, the same army that retains one quarter of the seats in the current parliament, the same army that had imprisoned her, and the same army for which she holds such an unabashedly nostalgic affection. Yet, declaring her struggle for a transition from military rule to modern democracy as 'second struggle for national independence',[49] Suu Kyi's path to re-sovereignising Burma is paved with seamlessly conflicting, contradicting, if not incommensurable models of state and state-formation, and a military democracy infused with Buddhist values. As Yu Bromley argues, military democracy is not an evolution of the traditional model of democracy but 'the military state of society, and the system of administration consisting of an elective and removable supreme chief, a council of elders and a

popular assembly'. And much like Suu Kyi's current arrangement with the military 'attention was particularly drawn to the democratic character of this system which left the decisive say to the free people'.[50]

Although widely regarded as a champion of democracy in the West, even so by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Suu Kyi's vision of a democratic state is perhaps as convoluted as her father's tainted legacy of militant anti-colonialism. In her famous speech at the Shwedagon Pagoda in 1989, Suu Kyi quoted her father in a familiar fervour and frequency: 'We must make democracy the popular creed. We must try to build up a free Burma in accordance with such a creed'.[51] The finest available means for 'building up' such 'creed', as it were, is the army: 'the role of the Army in Burma is crucial'.[52] A few passages later, Suu Kyi invokes her father yet again: 'the armed forces are meant for this nation and this people and it should be such a force having the honour and respect of the people'.[53] The same 'honour and respect' to be bestowed upon the armed forces, one must hasten to add, were also bestowed upon Aung San who founded the Burma Independence Army in the first place – under the auspices of overthrowing one invading force (British) with the help of another (Japanese) –, made up of a majority of ethnic Burmans who were responsible for the mass killings of 1,800 members of Delta Karen minorities in 1942.[54]

Yet, it is neither the consent nor the free choice of the people, but the 'honour and respect' for the military that form the basis for Aung San's vision of a democratic Burma. This nostalgic militarism remains at the heart of Suu Kyi's own revisionism of the Western democratic state models and their (in)compatibility with Burma. Despite her selective admiration for, and appropriation of, the democratic models in Germany, England, and the United States that place emphasis on 'economic development', human development, education, citizenship and rights, Suu Kyi finds them wholly inapplicable to Burma. 'Alien to indigenous values', Suu Kyi asserts, Western state models, 'could actually be made to serve as pretexts for resisting calls for democracy and human rights' without a proper understanding of 'human values' and 'human worth' in societies under tyrannical rule.[55] Predictably, her advocacy for a refusal of 'materialist', 'economically-driven' or 'developmental' state models[56] could be attributed to the Buddhist virtues of political salvation, as recounted to her by a ninety-year-old Buddhist Monk from her father's hometown: 'you will be attacked and relieved for honest politics […] Lay down your interest in *dukkha* [suffering] and you will gain *sukha* [bliss]'.[57]

In essence, Suu Kyi's vision of re-sovereignising Burma through values that embody her own mixed heritage – East and West, military and democracy, freedom and flight – is derivative of authoritarian and anti-colonial state apparatuses, and not of the desires and aspirations of the ethnic minorities. This leads to the imposition of an 'exclusive sovereignty' based upon the abstract ideals of body, soul, sympathy, worth and values, that is infused into state polices and institutions in the language of 'security' and 'safety', in which there is little room for tolerance of dissent, let alone insurgency or conflict.[58]

## Subalter-nation: Pascal Khoo Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts*

Much like Suu Kyi's *Freedom from Fear* a decade before, *From the Land of Green Ghost*s is inspired by the winds of political change as well as the suppressed calls for democracy following the 8 August 1988 (also known as '8888 Uprisings') nationwide protests against the

Burmese regime. Although, like Suu Kyi herself, the publication of Thwe's autobiography, too, has a fraternal connection – owing much to Thwe's benefactor John Casey, a Cambridge professor, who helps him to escape Burma and register for an English degree at Caius College – it is a far cry from the filial genealogy and inherited political habitus of Suu Kyi. Written for a global English audience, but from a communal and collective narrative perspective that is characteristic of postcolonial life histories Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts* refrains from every attempt at self-positioning or individual image-building. In so doing, it repudiates 'a unitary Cartesian self rooted in bourgeois origins, absolute, rational self-consciousness fully present to itself, timeless and above language, but a self-decentred and fragmented in time'.[59] This decentred and fragmented self is evident in Thwe's contriving use of sequestered nouns throughout the book – rather than the names or ranks of individuals – that are presented as chapter titles: 'Death of a Footballer'; 'Death of an Animist'; 'Death of a Priest'; and 'Hunters and the Hunted'.

In an equally acerbic manner, Thwe introduces himself not in the first person singular, but the first person plural: 'We were Padaung, we were Catholics and we seemed to live in a world of our own, with our ceremonies and traditions. The sense of security showed me that we lived in a paradise'.[60] Here, Thwe's immersion into the communal collective is not only furnished by his frequent use of first-person plural, but more importantly, by an insurrectional narrative mode that tampers with other autobiographical forms: testimonio's witness narration and memoir's nostalgia. For instance, while distancing himself from the perceived foreign or immigrant threat, which, in Suu Kyi's account, was orchestrated by British colonialism, Thwe writes:

> There was the idea of another paradise at the back of my mind; but this was of a paradise lost. My grandparents would tell me of a golden age, the age of the rule by the British in Burma. I had no real idea of what the British were or what their rule had been – just the feeling that their departure was regretted […] We were prosperous under the British, but when they went back they took the prosperity with them.[61]

Of course, we cannot simply take such blatant endorsement of the coloniser's good will as given, or even condone the crimes of the same coloniser on other communities elsewhere, but we cannot deny its narrative presence either, one that not only countervails the sort of anti-colonialism that is necessary for Suu Kyi to build the heroic image of her father, but one that goes on to question the very moment of nation-making as well as its narrative-making.

In what could be described as an *emulation* of Suu Kyi's own emulative self-fashioning through her father, Thwe goes on to incite his grandmother's disconcerting remark that the 'Burmans and Japanese bring nothing to us but war and destruction',[62] putting the latter on the same pedestal as the coloniser.

In their penchant for subversion and subalter-nation, both Thwe's sources and self-construction unfold through an ethical bind for the collective. The political solitude, as it were, allows the isolated individual to immediately connect his/her predicament to the collective, while renouncing the self-image, self-imposition and all other attempts at realising the self against the collective. A case in point, every major move in Thwe's life trajectory courses through a series of discoveries and encounters with another ethnic group, such as the Karen teacher who educated him into the secular system; the Shan farmers who taught them (the Padaung) wet-land cultivation (they were slash and burn farmers prior to that); the Kachin rebels who saved his comrades from the Burmans; and the 'wild

Kayahs' in Karen territories who saved them from hunger.[63] Such communal bonding through the re-*membering* of *other* communities into the non-national realm of the Padaung effectively foregrounds subalter-nation as an insurrectional narrative mode which, as Edward Said describes in the context of the Lebanese civil war, 'exists largely as a form recording its own impossibility, shading off or breaking into autobiography … reportage, pastiche, or apparently authorless discourse'.[64] In Thwe's case, in his constant wavering between a first person singular and a first person collective address, between seeing and showing, between witnessing and wandering, his insurrectional staging of sub-alter-nation is taken to its extreme by portraying both the Burmese state and its sovereignty as almost alien entities to his community. Recounting his visit to Mandalay for the first time, Thwe writes:

> I felt like a messenger to the world of the dead, because to the Padaung, as to many of the hill peoples, Central Burma is an alien land, the abode of evil spirits, green ghosts and the like – not to mention the Burmans themselves, whom we regarded almost without exception as liars, cheaters and Machiavellian schemers. [65]

In an erstwhile first encounter, Thwe describes his own coming of age from the remote jungle village of Phekon to his innocent discovery of Ne Win through his Karen Baptist teacher as follows:

> There [at school] also I heard for the first time, from the mouth of Joseph, about the greatness of the leader, General U Ne Win, the beneficent, far-seeing ruler of Burma. In the classroom, we also bowed everyday to the portrait of the General, so I began to feel he must be some sort of God or religious figure.[66]

This remark does not merely register as a confession of Thwe's baleful ignorance of his own citizenship, civic status, or the figurehead of his nation-state, but more importantly, as an ontic insurrection enabled by the epistemic violence that fosters such ignorance – from the historical treatment of the Frontier tribes as 'fringe subjects' to the outright denial of their very existence – which opens up space for performative nationalism and insurgent secessionism.

If pedagogic nationalism constructs 'epochal time' to signify the '*a priori* national presence' of a foundational community, Bhabha's 'emphasis on the temporal dimension in the inscription of these political entities – that are also potent symbolic and affective sources of cultural identity – serves to displace the historicism that has dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force'.[67] If pedagogic nationalism is 'the *langue* of the law', Bhabha affirms, performative nationalism is 'the *parole* of the people'[68], one that constantly interrupts, resists, and re-constitutes the former. And as Edward Said notes in the context of Palestine, conditions of statelessness, that is, fractures within the national and social imagination, generate narratives of 'rejection, drift, errance, uncertainty'.[69]

Rejecting Suu Kyi's claim concerning the 'voluntary' inclusion of ethnic minorities into the Union of Burma, in an almost identical chapter to Suu Kyi's 'Inheritance', Thwe writes:

> The independence constitution of Burma stipulated that after ten years the minority states that existed at the time of independence – the Shan and Karenni States – would have the legal right to secede from the Union of Burma. (States that were created at or after independence – the Kachin, Karen, Mon, Chin, and Arakan State – did not have the right. But many of them – especially those which had not been ruled directly from Rangoon during the British period – desired autonomy, if not full independence).[70]

Thwe's depiction of the minorities' sovereign and secessionist ambitions goes to the crux of Suu Kyi's derivative anti-colonialism, and its attendant nationalist pedagogy forged through Buddhist bonds: 'Burmese nationalism began to gather strength again in the 1920s … as a movement to keep the Buddhist religion pure in the face of foreign influence'.[71] This purity, Suu Kyi affirms, is the kernel 'of mutual understanding and tolerance' with which '*the other peoples* could also learn to live in harmony'.[72] In challenging this presumed assimilability of 'the other people' into the Union of Burma, Thwe turns his rejection of Suu Kyi's sovereignty into a full-fledged subversion:

> Catholicism had given a new identity to the Padaung, one that inevitably had political overtones. We looked up to the Pope as our leader, rather than to General Ne Win. Our religion at last placed us on terms of equality with the other peoples of Burma, and gave us a culture equal to that of Buddhism.[73]

The performative subversion produced by Catholicism not only undercuts the nationalist pedagogy of Buddhism, but in so doing, it reveals the insurrectional underpinnings of a sovereignty that is justly subaltern:

> For us teenage, hill-tribe Catholics, becoming a saint meant doing beautiful and heroic deeds that would be recorded in books of hagiography. Especially heroic would be the conversion of the heathen, which merged, in my mind, with standing up for our own tribe against the dominant Burmans.[74]

By way of pressing his narrative performance of 'standing up' for his tribe 'against the dominant Burmans' into insurgent action, Thwe revisits the insurgent origins of the very state formation of the sovereign Union of Burma:

> When the Japanese Imperial Army invaded Burma in 1942 with the help of Burmese nationalists, and welcomed by much of the Burmese population, most of the hill peoples (with some exceptions, such as a section of the Shans) fought on the side of the British. The minority people had always regarded the British as their protectors, and the loyalty of the Padaung, the Karenni and Karens was intense. When the 'Chindits' of General Orde Wingate – essentially British guerrilla troops sent from India to harass the Japanese occupiers – began their operations, the Nagas, the Kachins, and the Karens gave them invaluable help, acting as guides and fighting for them.[75]

I quoted this passage at length not only for its historical significance, but for its insurgent anti-colonialism that subverts Suu Kyi's portrayal of Aung San's *bona fide* anti-colonialism. In a rare moment of emulative self-fashioning, Thwe invokes his 'grandfather and his brothers and friends' who had 'fought alongside the British using home-made guns and weapons',[76] to overthrow the very enemy that Aung San had brought home in the first place. It thus comes as no surprise that, in the footsteps of his grandfather, Thwe goes on to pit Christianity against Buddhism, vindicating his desire to join the Karenni insurgents: 'I would present myself with all my gifts to the Church, my people and my country. I wanted to become a saint and martyr'.[77]

Pursued by *Tatmadaw* for his political involvement in the 1988 student demonstrations, Thwe arrives at the rebel camps of the Karenni about whom he had only been given a 'sinister picture' as bandits and kidnappers as a child.[78] Though initially reluctant to associate himself with the insurgents, to his surprise, Thwe's discovery of 'the poverty stricken', if not an almost abandoned state of minorities no more than twenty miles away from his village, makes him question whether he too has given in to

the state propaganda.[79] Along with his fellow students on the run, Thwe joins the Karenni insurgency in the capacity of a student leader, speaker, teacher and negotiator, which he describes as a collective moment of 'being instantly transformed into fighters for the future of the country, hardened veterans of the jungle, ready to face the enemy whom only a day before we were fleeing in terror for our lives'.[80]

Although Thwe terms the Burmese military as 'the enemy', he is careful to avoid the pitfalls of 'exclusive sovereignty'. Instead, Thwe's endorsement of insurgent politics embodies what Christian Hunold and John Dryzek call 'inclusive' state/sovereignty in which 'states welcome representation from a broad variety of interests, be they social movements, corporations, labour unions, or professional associations'.[81] Even if inclusive states place 'the people' at the heart of sovereign authority,

> [they] would no longer always be regarded qua members of particular nation-states. Rather, they would remain sovereign but would compose a more variable and fluid community made up of all those who happen to belong, or who are likely to belong, to the relevant community-at-risk.[82]

Sure enough, Thwe's burning desire to topple the Burmese regime is not only driven by secessionist dreams for the Padaung, but for other such 'communities-at-risk', who after all, shared Burmese as their 'common language', although 'they were extremely reluctant to use it (and the Kayah absolutely refused, because of their resentment for the Burmans)'.[83]

In a poignant depiction of the inclusive sovereignty of Karenni rebels, one that principally undermines Suu Kyi's vision of exclusive sovereignty, Thwe sums up the words of a Karenni insurgency leader as follows:

> We have been fighting this loathsome regime, and its predecessor ever since independence … Our nationalism had something blind about it – even if Burman arrogance was still more blind. But something important has happened. The Burmese people have at last begun to understand why we are fighting the regime, and we have begun to understand that we find common cause with them.[84]

When asked by Thwe whether he still dreams of an independent Karenni state, the leader continues:

> [y]es and no. Yes, because I love my people and would dearly wish to see a Karenni state in which the Karenni can run their own affairs without the bullying and corruption from Rangoon. No, because I can see that what we have been waging all these years is not just an ethnic struggle – although we thought it was […] We admire what the Burmans have done in the past few months. It has begun to show us that a federal system might be possible after all. We are tired of killing each other.[85]

Although Thwe presents such sovereign ambitions as those of the Karenni's and not as his own, his complicity with insurgent secessionism is made all the more evident in his testimonial account of the violence inflicted upon the stateless subjects of the subalter-nation; the Frontier tribes of Burma. In that sense, like the Karennis, Thwe endorses secessionism not as an exclusive sovereign model, but as an inclusive model that forges the bonds between and amongst the Frontier tribes, in which insurgent violence becomes 'a necessary tool for the ideological defence of [their] respective claims over national identity', territory and sovereignty. [86] Yet, such intra-ethnic inclusivity of Burmese Frontier areas remains largely unfilled, if not merely visionary in Thwe's narrative, as he fails to acknowledge the

longstanding internal conflicts between and among the non-Burmese tribes, such as the Rakhine vs Rohingya, Naga vs Kachin, Shan vs Wa, or Palaung vs Kachin, to name a few.[87]

## Conclusion

With over a dozen active insurgencies, perhaps nowhere else in the postcolony is the nation-state formation as deeply intersected as it is contested, than in Burma. At the time of writing this article, the clashes between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, vigilante Buddhist groups and the Burmese military are at their highest. An estimated 700,000 members of Rohingya minorities have fled to Bangladesh from the Arakan State. Western media continues to hold Suu Kyi's 'silent complicity' responsible for the ongoing ethnic cleansing, although in Asian media she garners much warmer reception: 'Suu Kyi has no power over the wholly autonomous military, which is under the exclusive control of Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing'.[88] In spite of this, Suu Kyi's affection for the army remains unscathed, for the sole reason that, like many other things in Burma, it was her father's creation. Having said that, Suu Kyi's 'silent complicity' with the Rohingya exodus should not come as a surprise to many, for, as this article has shown, her proclivities for Buddhist nationalism and military democracy could be traced, by a large measure, to her national autobiography. In this respect, Thwe's counter-narrative not only helps accentuate the fractures and fault lines in the genre of national autobiography, but also marks the limits of translating nationalist discourses into sovereign ambitions: whereas Suu Kyi portrays Aung San's subversion of the colonial authority as a struggle for an independent nation, Thwe portrays the minority's subversion of the Burmese state as a struggle for sovereign autonomy. At this juncture, it may serve us well to capture the moment of Thwe's own foray into Burmese politics:

> My entry into politics was by no means as dramatic as that of Aung San Suu Kyi with her speech at the Shwedagon, which it preceded by a few days. It started with my making a speech a Phekon, standing on a bullock cart on market day in front of a group of peasants and people from the town … Surrounded by a crowd of Padaung, Shan, Pao, Indha, Karens and Karenni – all there for the market day – and speaking in Burmese![89]

While the incommensurable fate of this para-biographical moment is symbolic of the cultural polarity, indigenous diversity and ethnic secessionism that have been endemic to the very idea of Burma, it also draws our attention to the immense potential of subaltern autobiographies in demarcating the historical, geocultural, as well as the *affective* coordinates of subalter-nation.

## Notes

1. William McGowan, 'Suu Kyi's Buddhist Problem', *Foreign Policy*, 2012. Available at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/17/aung-san-suu-kyis-buddhism-problem/ (accessed 12 February 2018); 'Suu Kyi declares Love for Myanmar Army', *The National*, 2013. Available at: https://www.thenational.ae/world/asia/suu-kyi-declares-love-for-myanmar-army-1.571289 (accessed 12 February 2018).
2. Robert Booth, 'Aung San Suu Kyi Picks Beatles and Tom Jones on Desert Island Discs', *The Guardian*, 2013. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/27/aung-san-suu-kyi-desert-island-discs (accessed 12 February 2018).

3. Brad Evans and Gayatri Spivak, 'When Law is Not Justice', *The New York Times*, 2016. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/opinion/when-law-is-not-justice.html (accessed 12 February 2018).
4. Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, London: Penguin, 1995, pp 205, 270.
5. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed Books, 1986, pp 51, 162.
6. Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005, pp 28–29, 69.
7. For a related discussion, see Pavan Kumar Malreddy, *Orientalism, Terrorism, Indigenism: South Asian Readings in Postcolonialism*, New Delhi: Sage, 2015, pp 123–141.
8. Philip Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization: Modernity, Masculinity, and the Nation-State*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008, p 17.
9. Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, p 40.
10. Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, p 69.
11. Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, p 77; emphasis original.
12. Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, p 5.
13. Martin A Danahay, *A Community of One: Masculine Autobiography and Autonomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, New York: SUNY Press, 1997, p 67.
14. Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, p 6.
15. Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, pp 5–6.
16. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, p 6; emphasis mine
17. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, pp 160–162.
18. Robyn Eckersley, 'Greening the Nation-State: From Exclusive to Inclusive Sovereignty', in John Barry and Robyn Eckersley (eds), *The State and the Global Ecological Crisis*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005, pp 159–180.
19. Although *Freedom From Fear* is not marketed as an autobiography, as this article will show, it adheres to a number of its generic features as outlined by Holden and Boehmer: (1) autobiographical pact enabled by collapsing the author, narrator and protagonist into a singular identity; (2) mirroring of this identity with the national destiny (Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, pp 17, 47–51) through 'pre-eminent, and form-giving and even dynastic position in the national family drama' (Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, p 84); and (3) propagation of documents the leader 'has authored [which] have played some part in the nationalist cause' (Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, pp 84–85). Moreover, both *Freedom from Fear* and *Letters from Burma* are listed autobiographies in various encyclopaedias. See Margaretta Jolly (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001.
20. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p xxix.
21. Richard Collin and Pamela Martin, *An Introduction to World Politics: Conflict and Consensus on a Small Planet*, London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, p 284.
22. Emma Larkin, 'The Force of a Woman', *The New Republic*, 2013. Available at: https://newrepublic.com/article/103083/lady-peacock-aung-san-suu-kyi (accessed 12 February 2018); Elisabeth Rubin, 'Aung San Suu Kyi, Beauty and the Beast', 2011, *Vogue Magazine*. Available at https://www.vogue.com/article/aung-san-suu-kyi-beauty-and-the-beast (accessed 12 February 2018).
23. Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, p 142.
24. Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, p 81.
25. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 217.
26. Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, p 71; emphasis original.
27. Holden, *Autobiography and Decolonization*, p 6.
28. Lisa Trivedi, 'Visually Mapping the "Nation": Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920–1930', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62(1), 2003, p 11.
29. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, n.p.
30. Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, p 77.

31. Danahay, *A Community of One*, p 67.
32. Devika Sharma and Frederik Tygstrup (eds), *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Sulture, Vol. 5*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015, p 127.
33. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 226.
34. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 220.
35. Homi K Bhabha (ed), *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge, 2013, p 292.
36. Giddens in Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp 298; Bhabha *Nation and Narration*, pp 298–299.
37. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 67.
38. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 63.
39. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 83.
40. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 100.
41. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, pp 133–134.
42. Although a majority of Chinese themselves are Buddhists (of Confucius or Taoist schools), Suu Kyi's attribution of migrant status to other such non-Burmese Buddhists goes hand-in-hand with the Orientalist constructions of Theravada Buddhism as the 'proper', 'rational', if not the 'purest' form of Buddhism in the East.
43. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 103.
44. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, pp 103–104.
45. 'Introduction' in John Barry and Robyn Eckersley (eds), *Greening the Nation State*, 2005, p 6.
46. Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*, London: Penguin, 2010, p 63; emphasis mine.
47. Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letter from Burma,* p 199.
48. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, pp 194–195; emphasis mine.
49. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 232.
50. Yu Bromley (ed), *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today, Vol. 1*, Berlin; Walter de Gruyter, 1973, p 134.
51. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 194.
52. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 205.
53. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 195.
54. Donald M Seekings, *Burma and Japan Since 1940: From 'Co-prosperity to 'Quiet Dialogue'*, Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2007, p 26.
55. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, pp 261–267.
56. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 268–269.
57. Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*, p 161.
58. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, pp 203–205.
59. Barbara Kosta, *Recasting Autobiography: Women's Counterfictions in Contemporary German Literature and Film*, Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994, p 17.
60. Pascal Khoo Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, London: HarperCollins, 2002, p 37.
61. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 37.
62. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 30.
63. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, pp 179–188.
64. Edward W Said. 'Foreword' to Elias Khoury, *Little Mountain*, trans. Maia Tabet, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p xvi.
65. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 109.
66. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 45.
67. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p 201.
68. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p 2; emphasis original.
69. Said, 'Foreword', p xxi.
70. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, pp 14–15; parenthesis original.
71. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 54.
72. Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*, p 81; emphasis mine.
73. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 107.
74. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 103.
75. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 29.

76. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 29.
77. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 82.
78. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 184.
79. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, pp 185–187.
80. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 200.
81. Christian Hunold and John Dryzek, 'Green Political Strategy and the State: Combining Political Theory and Comparative History', in John Barry and Robyn Eckersley (eds), *The State and the Global Ecological Crisis,* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005, pp 75–95.
82. Robyn Eckersley 'Greening the Nation-State', p 177.
83. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, pp 185–186.
84. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 200.
85. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 200.
86. Pavan Kumar Malreddy, 'Gender, Nation, and Violence in Hindi Cinema', *Kairos: The Journal of Critical Symposium*, 1(1),. 2016, p 5.
87. I owe this insight as well as the information to the external reader of this article.
88. Bertil Lintner, 'The Ties that Bind Suu Kyi's Hand', *Asia Times*, 21 October 2017. Available at: https://www.asiatimes.com/2017/10/article/ties-bind-suu-kyis-hands/ (accessed 2 February 2018). See also Sunanda Dutta Ray 'Why "Pragmatic" Suu Kyi is Silent on Rohingyas', *Asian Age,* 9 October 2018. Available at: https://www.asianage.com/opinion/oped/091018/why-pragmatic-suu-kyi-is-silent-on-rohingyas.html (accessed on June 18 2019). Ray writes 'Frail and delicate Aung San Suu Kyi might look, but she is her father's daughter. She will do nothing to damage her inheritance or alienate the masses'.
89. Thwe, *Form the Land of Green Ghosts*, p 172.

## Acknowledgements

This publication has received support from a grant by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation: MA 7119/1-1). The author wishes to thank the external reader of this article for his/her helpful comments.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft [grant number MA 711911-1].

## Note on contributor

*Pavan Kumar Malreddy* teaches English Literature at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. He has written extensively on the intersections of literature and postcolonial violence. His recent publications include several essays on Burmese and Middle Eastern literature, and a co-edited volume *Violence in South Asia* (2019, Routledge) and *Narratives of the War on Terr*or (2020, Routledge). He is currently working on a manuscript, tentatively titled *Insurgent Cultures: Narratives of Violence from the Global South*. He is the co-editor of *Kairos: A Journal of Critical Symposium*.

## ORCID

*Pavan Kumar Malreddy* http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4214-1464